

handle as much street level drug trafficking as their resources and expertise allows. The gap which exists between the two falls on the shoulders of the twenty-plus multi-jurisdictional drug task forces. In short, for much of the state, the multi-jurisdictional drug task forces are the back bone of drug enforcement in Illinois. In addition to handling traditional drug enforcement, these units have taken over the responsibility of investigating and dismantling the increasing number of methamphetamine labs located in Illinois. In 2004, the multi-jurisdictional drug task forces dismantled in excess of 960 meth labs.

The overwhelming majority (87.6%) of all police departments in the United States have less than 50 officers (Census of State and Local Law Enforcement Agencies, 2000). In Illinois, there are approximately 1025 police departments, with approximately 60% of those departments having less than 10 full-time officers. Law enforcement learned long ago that combining resources and expertise is the most efficient and effective way to address an issue of mutual concern. The drug task forces have proven that theory correct over the past decade. It has always been a commonly held belief that effective drug enforcement reduces violent crime. In Illinois, a review of drug arrests validates this belief. A study from 1994 to present revealed that in the areas covered by 18 of the 20 task forces which receive JAG assistance in Illinois, as drug arrests rose, the violent crime index was reduced. An even more telling correlation exists as it relates to commitments to the Illinois Department of Corrections for drug offenses. Examining IDOC commitments removes those drug arrests which do not take the offender off the street for an extended period of time (such as misdemeanor charges or felonies which result in probation). Previous studies conducted by the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority show that convictions from multi-jurisdictional drug task forces result more frequently in commitments to the Illinois Department of Corrections than those drug arrest convictions which were initiated by local law enforcement agencies.

To ensure that my message was an accurate portrayal of my Illinois counterparts, I asked the various Directors and Commanders of these units to express the impact of eliminating federal funding. I would like to share with you some of their abbreviated replies:

“East Central Illinois Task Force... All of the law enforcement agencies, the business and education community rely heavily on the task forces expertise in combating the fight against drugs...the most devastating issue is the degradation of the community by those criminals that prey on the community. The task force has been the driving force behind effective law enforcement in the east central Illinois area. The epidemic of meth and it's effects on the quality of life, family and overall safety has taken a great toll as it is. The rise in incidents of cocaine trafficking has increased and needs to be addressed. Without the existence of the task force violent crime and burglaries will likely increase dramatically.”

“The elimination of the Byrne/JAG Grant would have a catastrophic effect on the Metropolitan Enforcement Group of Southwestern Illinois... The majority of the Board members indicated that they would be forced either (to) withdraw from the Unit or reduce their participation to that of a financial contributor. MEGSI would also be required to lay off one direct hire Agent.”

“KAMEG (funding)... loss would have to be absorbed by the villages and counties

already feeling the state's current financial crisis on their existing budgets. KAMEG would likely lose officers because of the lack of Byrne/JAG reimbursement. In addition, we would lose our only secretary, whose salary is grant funded."

"VMEG is made up of 8 agents and 2 ISP supervisors. The Byrne/Jag funding pays for 5 of the 8 agent positions. Eliminating this funding would cut our number of agents by 62%. These are not administrative or fluff positions but are the front line working agents. This would leave VMEG with 2 ISP personnel and 3 agents total. Assuming the percentage would carry over into the investigative figures, all areas such as arrests, cases opened, etc. would be reduced by 62% or more. VMEG does not have local money to pay for any additional agents and state funding has also been reduced. The elimination of this funding would be the beginning of the end for VMEG."

"SLANT has three offices covering the northwest part of Illinois and three counties in southern Wisconsin ... If the funding was lost, the Monroe office would lose one officer which would leave them with a unit of 6 officers to service three counties. The Rockford office would lose one officer which would leave them with 6 officers to service the second largest city in Illinois. SLANT would also lose its Administrative Assistant who handles all clerical work and Asset Forfeiture duties for the entire SLANT unit."

"The West Central Illinois Task Force is the primary if not the only deterrent of narcotic trafficking and enforcement in West Central Illinois. Without the funding that we currently receive from the Byrne Grant our mission would be all but non-existent. We cover approx 10 counties with our task force and once again are the primary responders to narcotic crimes in them. The interaction and cooperation between the Local and State agencies that participate in the Task Force is Monumental. Without the Byrne Grant funding this concept would be dissolved. Our Task Force support staff is also paid from the Byrne Grant. Without the support staff, our work load and productivity would be cut in half."

"The SouthEastern Illinois Drug Task Force (SEIDTF) will cease to exist within a year if the Byrne Funds are eliminated... With the proliferation of clandestine methamphetamine production throughout our area of responsibility, the asset seizures and forfeitures have been sporadic at best...The SEIDTF personnel made 163 arrests last year and responded to more than sixty meth labs. There is no indication that this year will be any different....we are still the only ISP drug unit in the area and will be needed to continue to respond to calls for service when a local dealer sets up shop in some small community in southeastern Illinois."

"For the WCITF-Macomb, elimination of funding would result in 1 agency leaving the TF, 1 agency possibly leaving the TF depending on their budget at the time, and the loss of our part-time secretary. The full time secretary may see her hours cut depending on what the TF could afford. Having very limited financial resources, it is not likely that the TF could afford to purchase equipment that it has in the past received through grants from ICJIA."

“The North Central Narcotics Task Force (NCNTF) is a multi-jurisdictional task force that spans three counties and covers 12 jurisdictions. The elimination or reduction of Byrne/JAG Funding would...force police officers off the street to do clerical work...eliminate communication equipment such as pagers and cell phones... eliminate federal funding to reimburse a portion of officer overtime costs. This encourages those departments to stay committed to the NCNTF as personnel costs rise.”

“The elimination of the Byrne funding will have a very NEGATIVE impact on LCMEG's ability to address the drug problems in the Lake County area...The loss of the funding will cause us to eliminate the staff positions, this will cause the jobs they now perform to be reassigned to Police Officers... As history has shown us, time after time, the people that prevail are those which "network" and combine their resources. As we, the Law Enforcement Community, are being forced to abandon the "task force" concepts due to lack of funding, the Drug dealers and Terrorists are becoming more efficient because they're pooling their resources and intelligence.”

“The elimination or reduction of this grant would have a very severe impact on the LaSalle Task Force....At the present time the funding accounts for 50% of the Task Force funds with the remaining 50% made up from fines and forfeiture's. I strong believe that the elimination of this funds would force the Task force to close it's doors.”

“TF6 is the primary drug enforcement entity in this area and has been a fixture in this area since 1983....TF6 consist of 10 local, county, state agencies... The proposed Byrne/JAG cuts will result in the closure of this unit. Narcotics related crime will increase dramatically and drug dealers will operate at will without the presence of Task Force 6. The local and county agencies rely on Task Force 6's expertise and resources to combat this societal plaque. I look at this proposed Byrne/JAG cut as closing down a police department and abandoning our children and citizens.”

“Central Illinois Enforcement Group is responsible for seven counties in Central Illinois. Many departments rely on us to provide knowledge to them concerning officer safety issues, i.e. booby traps, meth lab hazards, counter surveillance trends, etc. CIEG would be able to possibly exist for another year (or two). After that, we would be forced to send all of the inspectors back to their departments and CIEG would no longer exist.”

“The Southern Illinois Enforcement Group is but one of the Units operating in the southern most 31 counties in Illinois...We are tasked with the "normal" duties of a MEG Unit with the added burden of methamphetamine investigations as well...SIEG's participation in these investigations would not have been possible without personnel employed here through Byrne funding... Because we are situated in an economically depressed area, we rely on Byrne funding to supplement our manpower needs with direct hire agents. Our contributing member agencies cannot afford to pick up the extra costs associated with a decrease in Byrne funding. If that were to be the case, we would lose 4 agents currently assigned here as well as the 5th we were planning to add with the upcoming Byrne grant funding. If this were to happen, the contributing member agencies of SIEG would be left vulnerable with drug enforcement seriously debilitated.”

"We have eight (8) narcotics agents working under cover in a five (5) county area in central IL. Our unit investigates approx. 320 cases each year which results in the arrests of 285 to 298 defendants. These subjects are all mid to upper level drug dealers. If Federal funds under the Byrne/JAG are eliminated our unit will lose three (3) agents. The loss of these agents will cripple our ability to continue effective narcotics investigations. Narcotics trafficking will go unchecked and spread. We might as well turn the keys to our communities over to the gangs."

In closing, state and local police departments in Illinois are committed to this multi-jurisdictional principal and dedicate many of their own limited resources to this ideology. The Byrne/JAG Funding is the glue that brings hundreds of law enforcement agencies and their resources together to efficiently and effectively attack local drug trafficking which reduces violent crime and promotes safer communities. Without that glue, we will weaken our grip on this important issue and negatively impact the quality of life for the citizens which we all serve in this great nation. Thank you for your time and consideration with this critical issue.